

**REMARKS**

Applicants respectfully request entry of the foregoing amendments and reconsideration of the application in view of the amendments above and the remarks below. Claims 1-26 have been canceled (without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter therein), and claims 27 and 34 have been amended. Claims 27-36 remain pending in the application. Claims 27, 31, and 34 are the independent claims.

Applicants respectfully submit that the foregoing amendments do not present any new issues, and should, therefore, be entered without objection. Specifically, in compliance with the requirements outlined in 37 C.F.R. § 1.116, the foregoing amendments have been made only to cancel claims and comply with the requirements set forth in the final Office Action, with the exception of a minor amendment to claim 34, which does not present any new issues for consideration.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that all currently pending claims are immediately allowable.

**Interview**

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's courtesies to their undersigned representative during an in-person interview conducted on March 22, 2004. During the interview, the foregoing amendments to the claims and the references of record were discussed. Additionally, the Examiner agreed to consider the references submitted electronically on CD-ROM (which had been previously filed with the office, but inadvertently separated from the file).

**Allowable subject matter**

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication, on page 6 of the Office Action, that claims 27-36 have been allowed. Applicants respectfully submit that, as amended, claims 27 and 34 remain allowable for the same reasons cited by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Applicants note that, although the Examiner has indicated reasons for allowance of claims 27-36, additional grounds of patentability may exist. For example, the reasoning set forth in the Office Action addresses only certain features of the independent claims; however,

Applicants respectfully submit that additional features (including features contained in the various dependent claims) may present additional grounds for allowance.

**Form PTO/SB/08A not initialed**

Applicants note that the Form PTO/SB/08A recently returned by the Examiner was not fully initialed. The Examiner has explained to the undersigned that the electronic copies of these documents, which were submitted on a CD-ROM accompanying the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed on March 14, 2003, were placed in record storage and are inaccessible to the Examiner.

Therefore, Applicants hand-carried a copy of the CD-ROM to the Examiner during the interview conducted on March 22, 2004, and the Examiner has agreed to consider all of the references on the CD-ROM.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner completely initial the form PTO/SB/08A originally filed on March 14, 2003 (a clean copy of which was provided to the Examiner during the March 19, 2004 interview), and return a copy of the initialed form with the next communication from the Patent Office, after considering the references on the CD-ROM.

**The claim objections have been obviated**

Applicants respectfully submit that the objection to claim 4, which has been canceled, is moot. Applicants further submit that the objection to claim 27 has been obviated by way of the amendment above. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the objection to claim 27.

**Rejections of claims are moot**

Applicants respectfully submit that all claim rejections set forth in the final Office Action have been mooted by way of the foregoing amendments canceling all rejected claims.

**Conclusion**

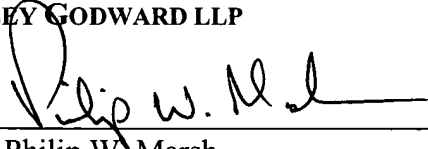
All rejections having been addressed, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance, and earnestly solicit a Notice of Allowance, which is believed to be in order. Should the Examiner have any questions regarding this communication, or the application in general, he is invited to telephone the undersigned at 703-456-8108.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16, 1.17, and 1.21 that may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-1283.

Dated: 4/27/04

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Respectfully submitted,  
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